

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Answers from the Department of Social & Health Services' (DSHS)
Health & Recovery Services Administration (HRSA) About

Washington State DSHS Access Brokers

Non-Emergent Medical Transportation (NEMT) & Interpreter Services (IS)

June 11, 2007

Who Do I Contact For Transportation Assistance?

- “Brokers” are contracted by DSHS to authorize non-emergent medical transport for DSHS medical clients, as well as interpreter events for DSHS medical providers & staff.
- **For emergencies, 9-1-1 should be called.** Brokers do not authorize ambulance trips.
- DSHS/HRSA staff cannot authorize or deny trips – only Brokers can.
- Because of this, clients & medical providers need to contact the Broker for their county to address any concerns about a trip or interpreter event. **HRSA staff can only assist after a client or medical provider has worked with the Broker first, including Broker’s ombuds/supervisors.**
- For a list of Washington State Brokers, their phone numbers & the counties they serve, go to:
<http://maa.dshs.wa.gov/transportation/phone.html>

What Do Washington State’s Brokers Do?

- Brokers arrange & pay for trips for qualifying DSHS/HRSA clients. Brokers also arrange & pay for interpreter services events for “requesters” (DSHS staff & HRSA medical providers).
- Brokers take phone calls from clients & requesters. Brokers authorize/deny trips & interpreter events. Brokers decide the transport a client gets: transit (bus), gas vouchers, taxi, van, individual or grouped ride. Brokers decide who will transport & what agency will provide interpreting.
- Brokering is funded by Medicaid. Medicaid money can only be used for Medicaid services. Federal law requires that the least amount of Medicaid money be used to get the job done.
- Brokers can only arrange for transport & interpreting to help clients get medical care.
- Federal Medicaid rules require DSHS/HRSA to spend the least amount of money to get the job done. DSHS needs to make certain that its clients’ safety & health needs are met by getting clients to necessary medical appointments, & by providing interpreters to the medical providers once the client is there. The Brokers must do all of this at once.
- Transportation & interpreter services are provided by Brokers’ subcontractors:
 - Over 190 transporters including taxis, van companies, transits, volunteer agencies, family-owned small businesses, for-profits, non-profits, gas stations, etc. operate over 6,000 vehicles. Brokers inspect drivers & vehicles annually, authorizing over 12,000 trips/day.
 - Brokers also subcontract with about twenty language agencies, using interpreters registered by DSHS. Brokers authorize over 1,100 interpreter events for medical providers each day, in addition to interpreter events for DSHS staff to work with DSHS clients.

What Do HRSA Staff Do?

- HRSA staff cannot approve, authorize or pay for trips – only Brokers can. HRSA staff can & do review Brokers, working with them to assure that all Medicaid rules are followed.

- HRSA reviews the Brokers & what they do. This includes giving other companies a chance to show that they can be Brokers that spend less money & provide better access to services.
 - HRSA announced a “Solicitation” (request for bids) on December 29, 2003 so that it could see who could provide the best Broker services. Many state & national bidders responded.
 - Experts at four different Washington State agencies reviewed the bids & scored them. The scores were added up & DSHS signed new contracts with Brokers effective July 1, 2004.

How Do The Broker Phones Work?

DSHS requires each Broker to have enough toll-free phone lines & call-taker staff to answer 80% of all client calls within three minutes. All Brokers also must have FAX machines so that medical providers can send in ride & interpreter requests without waiting on the phone.

Some Broker phone systems ask callers to choose options (Request Ride, Compliment/Complain, etc.). Callers get faster service if, after calling the Broker, they listen to the Broker’s message on the phone & then choose what they need by pressing the appropriate extension.

- **Client Transportation?** Clients should be ready to share information about their medical program, how far they can walk, if they can use a transit bus, if they have access to a car & other information the Broker needs. Clients need to answer these questions before the Broker can help.
 - **Clients’ first calls may take a while.** Brokers are required to make new records for each new client so they have to ask a lot of questions. Later calls are quicker.
- **Canceling a ride?** Call the Broker as soon as possible. Late cancels count as a “No Show” & can affect a client’s future rides.
- **Return Rides?** Each Broker chooses one of these ways:
 - **Preschedule the return ride** when the main ride is scheduled – then the return ride can be more timely. If a client waits more than 30 minutes for the return ride or needs to change the return time, call the Broker to get or change the estimated return pick-up time.
 - **Will-call return (“I’m ready now”):** Ask the Broker their procedures when requesting the main ride. Follow the Broker’s procedures: either call the provider that took the client to the appointment (“Return Card”), or call the Broker.
- **Medical Providers Helping Clients Get Transportation?**
 - FAX requests to the Broker – many Brokers have their own forms.
 - Some Brokers have secured on-line internet forms. Their websites have more information.
- **Requesters Needing Interpreter Services?** Requesters are limited to DSHS staff & HRSA-contracted medical providers.
 - The request form used for Interpreter Services is the *DSHS 17-123*; or ask for & use the Brokers’ multiple request form.
 - Call the Broker to get that Broker’s form.

My Ride Is Late –Or– They Want Me Ready Early. Why?

Brokers may ask clients to be ready one hour before their medical appointment for local rides, or earlier for long-distance rides. Brokers also train local transport providers how to group rides like the airport shuttles do. **To report late pick ups**, call the Broker directly.

- HRSA’s priority is for clients going to medical appointments.
- Rides for clients returning home from medical appointments are also important.

- Brokers ask clients to be ready early so that the driver can quickly help them get on the van or taxi & move on to the next appointment. Drivers are not paid for waiting.

The DSHS/HRSA Access Broker:

- **Wants the client to ride with other people, but the client used to ride alone.**
- **Won't let the client or requester pick the company, driver or interpreter.**
- **Wants the client to ride the bus.**

Why are they doing this?

Federal & state rules say that the Broker, not anyone else, picks what transport the client will use. This means that the Broker picks: what **kind of transport** including transit (bus), gas vouchers or reimbursement; **individual or group ride**; & the **transporter/driver/agency**. Federal & state rules require the Broker to choose the lowest cost method that does the job.

- **Group Rides** are extremely common in Washington State for all kinds of state agencies, public & private companies, & individuals. These group rides are like the airport shuttles that many people use all the time. The Brokers use group rides because they cost less & get the job done. They check to see that the rides are safe.
- **Brokers pick the transporting company, agency &/or driver** because Brokers must choose the lowest cost transport that gets the job done. Brokers have to tell federal & state auditors what they did with taxpayer's Medicaid money & why they spent it the way they did.
 - **Part of the Broker job is increasing competition.** Often the best way to get a better price is to ask several companies if they can do a better job for less money.
- **Transit (Public Bus)** is also extremely common in Washington State for all kinds of people. The Broker can give bus passes to qualified clients which they can use for anything (not just medical appointments) including grocery runs, social & community events, job searches, family visits, etc.
 - A client must have at least one verifiable medical appointment to receive a bus pass, & may need several verifiable medical appointments in a month.
 - One-third of all DSHS/HRSA Broker trips in Washington State are by bus.
 - If a client cannot use transit, the Broker will ask the client's local primary care provider (PCP) to document why not, using the Broker's form. PCPs are:
 - A Medical Doctor (MD), Doctor of Osteopathy (DO), Physician's Assistant – Certified (PA-C) or Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner (ARNP).
 - At the Broker's option for mode only: a Physical Therapist (PT) under PCP authority.
 - For mental health, a Mental Health Professional (MHP) authorized by the client's RSN to diagnose, prescribe for & treat the client.

Why does the Broker want to transport only to local providers?

The Broker wants the client to go to a "local provider," but the client has been going to a doctor for a while or needs to go to a non-local doctor.

Federal & state rules require that the least amount of money be spent for transporting clients to & from covered medical appointments. A large part of transport costs is distance: longer trips cost more money. So if a Broker pays for a trip that is outside of the local community where the client lives, the Broker must document why the "longer trip" is medically necessary.

- **State rules require that all trips outside of the local community be documented.** Each

Broker is required to have its own documentation. Even five extra miles can cost a lot of money.

- **Clients & their providers will have to answer questions & produce documents to Brokers about why a medical appointment cannot be done in the client's local community.** The Broker's forms may have to be signed by a MD, DO, PA-C or ARNP.
 - For instance, Brokers need to have documentation from the client's Healthy Options plan or fee-for-service primary care provider (PCP) to transport to a non-local specialist. This might be verbal but is usually needed in writing.
 - Brokers protect this information because of HIPAA.
 - Brokers are HIPAA Business Associates of DSHS by contract.
- **Clients may have to try all the appropriate medical providers in their local community before the Broker will pay for transport out of the local area.**
 - Brokers do not have to arrange for transport if a client refuses to go to a local medical provider.
 - Clients are still free to see any provider of their choice, but transport will not be paid.
- **Clients in a Healthy Options managed care plan are free to choose a primary care provider (PCP) within their plan according to the plan's rules, but transport to an out-of-area (usually out-of-county) PCP will not be paid by the Broker.**
 - Federal regulations allow Medicaid to deny transport when costs are unusual or exceptional. Driving or being driven past several available PCPs to an out-of-county PCP is an exceptional cost.
 - Clients are still free to choose an out-of-county PCP within their plan's rules. The Broker however is not required to pay the transport to those PCPs.

Who do I contact?

Clients & medical providers who have issues with a Broker need to work them out directly with the Broker first. **Only Brokers can authorize & pay for trips & interpreter events.** HRSA staff are **not** able to arrange or pay for transport or interpreter events. **If a client or medical provider has worked with a Broker & is still not satisfied, they can contact HRSA staff–**

- **By mail:**

DSHS/HRSA Office of Transportation & Interpreter Services
P.O. Box 45532
Olympia, Washington 98504-5532

- **By FAX:** 1-360-664-0261

- **By toll-free telephone:** 1-800-562-3022 (Medical Assistance Customer Service Center)

- **Or by email:**

DSHSDLHRSADHSTISTransportation@dshs.wa.gov (Non-Emergent Medical Transport)

DSHSDLHRSADHSTISInterpreters@dshs.wa.gov (Interpreter Services)

Clients & providers contacting DSHS/HRSA staff should be prepared to share details of what happened including the names of the people they spoke with at the Broker.

DSHS/HRSA is committed to providing low cost, safe & reliable access to medical services for its clients through its Transportation & Interpreter Services Brokers.

For a list of Brokers, their phone numbers & the counties they serve, go to this website:

<http://maa.dshs.wa.gov/transportation/phone.html>